Dear Santa,

We are from Waveland and our home was at:

[redacted] Marcus Dr.

We are now living at:

Address: [redacted] Marcus Dr.

City Waveland State MS Zipcode 39576

Phone No. [redacted]

Our family consists of:

William [redacted], Jesse [redacted] (7yrs. old), & Shannon [redacted]. My mom & dad (Glenda & Mike [redacted]. They retired last yr. & moved across the street to be close to us.

Our Katrina experience was:

~~Please do~~ Please see attached. You asked for it! :)

Write something special that you would like Santa to bring you or your family:

Due to the lack of room available until we can build another home, gift certificates to Home Depot, Lowes, Sears, or Bailey Lumber would be very helpful in our recovery & greatly appreciated.

Please use back or another sheet of paper, if you want to write more. We want to hear your story.

Return by November 30th to:

Mayor's Office, City of Waveland, P. O. Box 539, Waveland, MS 39576

December 8, 2005

We evacuated to Natchez, MS. August 28th. We camped there with my mom and dad in their motor home. There were five of us and a cat and an African Grey Parrot. We were all exhausted from working so hard to prepare and driving in traffic in fear of the unknown. That night we made the beds and prayed that in the morning when Katrina was scheduled to hit, our friends and neighbors would be ok and we would have a home to return to. None of us slept very well that night. The next morning we woke up to realize the storm was much more powerful than any other storm in the history of the United States. Our eyes were glued to the television hoping for some news of our little town. All of the reports we received were from Alabama, Biloxi, MS, Gulfport, and New Orleans. Saturday morning, after finally locating gas cans, we loaded gasoline, water, and a few snacks to drive 212 miles to see our homes. As we started the trip we saw increased trees uprooted, roofs of homes destroyed, small towns heavily damaged, and or hearts were heavy. As we drove down Hwy. 603, we saw boats scattered, cars overturned, and homes demolished. At that point we realized we had lost everything. When we drove down our small street of Marcus all we saw was rubble, the rubble was over 20' high in some places. We stopped our cars and rushed to each others arms The sun was merciless, it was unbearably hot, the stench was overpowering and biting flies attacked us as we walked in a daze around our two homesteads, we had to climb over trees, lumber, and roofs, to get to our homes that once stood. I had a concrete slab left and our shop we had stored our entire inventory in for our business was gone. I did see among the foul smelling black mud a few of my possessions, Billy found his safe which had been uprooted from where he had bolted it to the concrete slab. Mother had a few bricks and some dishes on her slab. I remember being so excited when I found something, but it was precious little. I had lost my Great Grandmothers antique furniture and figurines. It was so hard to see my little boy's toys and stuffed animals in that mud. Everybody lost everything down here. My roof was not even on my property. Mom and dad took Jesse and went back to Natchez that night. Billy and I stayed to try and salvage anything we could from the piles of rubble. It was the worse experience of my life. I found my bicycle which didn't fair very well but I rode it anyway and went to see my church and my little boy's school that was right around the corner, St. Clare. It hurt me even worse than seeing my home. The beautiful church and school was gone. I can't even begin to describe the agony, wondering who stayed, Jesse asked me about his school friends and of course I had left my address book at

home. It didn't really matter; none of the cell phones were working. But after seeing your home demolished then your church, school, and all your friend's homes, it just got worse and worse. Our entire beautiful little town was leveled; it looked like a nuclear weapon had gone off. It was by far the worst thing I have ever had to think about or see in my life. Words cannot describe!

I love this town, St Clare, my neighbors, the fishing, and the beach, everything about it. I have been so happy here. It is so quiet and it was so beautiful. My Great Grandmother lived here and I have been coming down here since I was a little girl and have lived down here for over 13 years and now here was destruction, black sewer water coming up out of the ground, and the stench of rotting refrigerators and death everywhere. By the time I came back to our slab I was so sick, I could barley walk, I just crawled inside the cab of the truck, curled up, and cried myself to sleep.

We returned to the motor home after 3 days of sleeping on a friend's front porch which was bowed and now his back porch. His house had been turned completely around. It stormed for the first two nights and we had to put up a tarp around the porch. Our sleeping bags and towels were getting wet. The sleep was interrupted every hour. I would hear things. The wind was rustling the bags in the trees and everything else. I kept waking up wondering what every sound was. I would sit straight up from a sound sleep and whisper, *what was that!* It was pitch black and we were all alone back there, the only people we saw were military and they only came by maybe once during the day. There were helicopters almost every hour going by overhead. Nobody was around at night accept maybe one or two pickup trucks would come by going about 5 miles an hour with spotlights after midnight, they were looters. I found our fishing boat and two of our sea do's. When I was able to go get them, someone had taken my dad's sea do and his fishing boat. I felt as if I was in a war zone. Occasionally you would even hear gun shots. When we finally arrived at the motor home it was late and we were so hungry. Nothing was open the entire 200 miles back. It was hard traveling back and forth 400 miles every other day so we finally decided to move back even without electricity or water, we did have generators. Thank God for the volunteers that handed out water, ice, and food. Billy put a tent up and fixed an air conditioner so we did have an air conditioned tent. That save me, it was 100° after Katrina. FEMA told us that if we cleared a spot 12 X 40′ space we could have a trailer delivered to our slab. We worked so hard clearing our property for our trailer. Billy threw his hip out and pulled muscles in his back and kept on working, he would not stop. We were in a

hurry because we had over 20′ of debris in some places and we wanted to be ready for FEMA. He pulled roofs down the street with the Isuzu and chains but we cleaned a spot. After the 6th week and clearing just about our entire lot ourselves and still not obtaining a trailer, Habitat for Humanity brought us one and stocked it with a tv, dvd player, towels, pots and pans, dishcloths, movies, and food. They were one the nicest couples that we have ever met. They came at a time when we thought we were lost. Every time we would think we had had it and was lost, God would provide us with more hope through the wonderful people we met. If not for our family and the wonderful church groups and all of their help and support, we would have truly been lost. I located Two 250 gallon water containers, one for my mom and dad and one for our family and we filled them up with gallon jugs of water so we would have fresh water for our trailer. The gallon jugs are getting hard to find and I don't think it is safe to drink our water even now but we are out of the tent. Jesse's school reopened Nov. 3rd, he was so excited to see all his friends again. Everyone worked so hard to get St. Clare opened again. It could not have happened without all of the support from Tommy Longo and all of the wonderful donations from volunteers, I am truly blessed to have met such wonderful people in this trying time. We received electricity Nov. 20th. Now we are still battling and waiting on the insurance companies and SBA along with everyone else to find out what we can build or if we can afford to move inland, but that is an entire different story. My family told me to start a journal so now I have twelve pages written about our experience, putting it into 3 was tough. I left out allot. Everything was such an ordeal, taking care of business, getting gas, washing clothes, everything! I was electrocuted the first night in our campground, there were not covers on our outlets and I turned the metal handle and stepped out onto the metal steps, barefooted and it was raining. I wouldn't even walk up the steps after we lost power. I stayed outside in the rain for a long time. I couldn't stop shaking the rest of the day. That was just one of many of my little experiences we have endured through the last three months. Like I say, I have twelve more pages of this kind of stuff. Billy just got out of the hospital, he was diagnosed with gastritis. He has never been hospitalized before, the doctors say it was stress related, can't imagine why, we are still feeling Katrina's wrath!!!

Thank you for caring,
Sincerely,
Billy, Shannon, and Jesse